

WHAT CONGRESS AND GANDHI HAVE DONE TO THE UNTOUCHABLES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX XVI

THE WAVELL PLAN

(i) White Paper presented to Parliament on 14th June 1945 by the Secretary of State for India, containing His Majesty's Government's Proposal relating to the Government of India.

1. During the recent visit of Field-Marshal Viscount Wavell to this country" His Majesty's Government reviewed with him a number of problems and discussed particularly the present political situation in India.
2. Members will be aware that since the offer by His Majesty's Government to India in March 1942 there has been no further progress towards the solution of the Indian constitutional problem.
3. As was then stated, the working out of India's new constitutional system is a task which can only be carried through by the Indian peoples themselves.
4. While His Majesty's Government are at all times most anxious to do their utmost to assist the Indians in the working out of a new constitutional settlement, it would be a contradiction in terms to speak of the imposition by this country of self-governing institutions upon an unwilling India. Such a thing is not; possible, nor could we accept the responsibility for enforcing such institutions at the very time when we were, by its purpose, withdrawing from all control of British Indian affairs.
5. The main constitutional position remains therefore as it was. The offer of March 1942 stands in its entirety without change or qualification. His Majesty's Government still hope that the political leaders in India may be able to come to an agreement as to the procedure whereby India's permanent future form of government can be determined.
6. His Majesty's Government are, however, most anxious to make any contribution that is practicable to the breaking of the political deadlock in India. While that deadlock lasts not only political but social and economic progress is being hampered.
7. The Indian administration, over-burdened with the great tasks laid upon it by the war against Japan and by the planning for the post-war period, is further strained by the political tension that exists.

8. All that is so urgently required to be done for agricultural and industrial development and for the peasants and workers of India cannot be carried through unless the whole-hearted co-operation of every community and section of the Indian people is forthcoming.
9. His Majesty's Government have therefore considered whether there is something which they could suggest in this interim period, under the existing constitution, pending the formulation by Indians of their future constitutional arrangements, which would enable the main communities and parties to co-operate more closely together and with the British to the benefit of the people of India as a whole.
10. It is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to introduce any change contrary to the wishes of the major Indian communities. But they are willing to make possible some step forward during the interim period if the leaders, of the principal Indian parties are prepared to agree to their suggestions and to co-operate in the successful conclusion of the war against Japan as well as in the reconstruction in India which must follow the final victory.
11. To this end they would be prepared to see an important change in the composition of the Viceroy's Executive. This is possible without making any change in the existing statute law except for one amendment to the Ninth Schedule to the Act of 1935. That Schedule contains a provision that not less than three members of the Executive must have had at least 10 years' service under the Crown in India. If the proposals I am about to lay before the House meet with acceptance in India, that clause would have to be amended to dispense with that requirement.
12. It is proposed that the Executive Council should be reconstituted and that the Viceroy should in future make his selection for nomination to the Crown for appointment to his Executive from amongst leaders of Indian political life at the Centre and in the Provinces, in proportions which would give a balanced representation of the main communities, including equal proportions of Moslems and Caste Hindus.
13. In order to pursue this object, the Viceroy will call into conference a number of leading Indian politicians who are the heads of the most important parties or who have had recent experience as Prime Ministers of Provinces, together with a few others of special experience and authority. The Viceroy intends to put before this conference the proposal that the Executive Council should be reconstituted as above stated and to invite from the members of the conference a list of names. Out of these he would hope to be able to choose the future members whom he would recommend for appointment by His Majesty to the Viceroy's Council although the responsibility for the recommendations must of course continue to rest with

him, and his freedom of choice therefore remains unrestricted.

14. The members of his Council who are chosen as a result of this arrangement would of course accept the position on the basis that they would wholeheartedly co-operate in supporting and carrying through the war against Japan to its victorious conclusion.
15. The members of the Executive would be Indians with the exception of the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, who would retain his position as War Member. This is essential so long as the defence of India remains a British responsibility.
16. Nothing contained in any of these proposals will affect the relations of the Crown with the Indian States through the Viceroy as Crown Representative.
17. The Viceroy has been authorised by His Majesty's Government to place this proposal before the Indian Leaders. His Majesty's Government trust that the leaders of the Indian communities will respond. For the success of such a plan must depend upon its acceptance in India and the degree to which responsible Indian politicians are prepared to co-operate with the object of making it a workable interim arrangement. In the absence of such general acceptance existing arrangements must necessarily continue.
18. If such co-operation can be achieved at the Centre it will no doubt be reflected in the Provinces and so enable responsible Governments to be set up once again in those Provinces where, owing to the withdrawal of the majority party from participation, it became necessary to put into force the powers of the Governors under Section 93 of the Act of 1935. It is to be hoped that in all the Provinces these Governments would be based on the participation of the main parties, thus smoothing out communal differences and allowing Ministers to concentrate upon their very heavy administrative tasks.
19. There is one further change which, if these proposals are accepted, His Majesty's Government suggest should follow.
20. That is, that External Affairs (other than those tribal and frontier matters which fall to be dealt with as part of the defence of India) should be placed in the charge of an Indian Member of the Viceroy's Executive so far as British India is concerned, and that fully accredited representatives shall be appointed for the representation of India abroad.
21. By their acceptance of and co-operation in this scheme the Indian leaders will not only be able to make their immediate contribution to the direction of Indian affairs, but it is also to be hoped that their experience of co-operation in government will expedite agreement between them as to the method of working out the new constitutional arrangements,
22. His Majesty's Government consider, after the most careful study of the

question, that the plan now suggested gives the utmost progress practicable within the present constitution. None of the changes suggested will in any way prejudice or prejudge the essential form of the future permanent constitution or constitutions for India.

23. His Majesty's Government feel certain that given goodwill and a genuine desire to co-operate on all sides, both British and Indian, these proposals can mark a genuine step forward in the collaboration of the British and Indian peoples towards Indian self-government and can assert the rightful position, and strengthen the influence, of India in the counsels of the nations.

(ii) Broadcast Speech by His Excellency the Viceroy at New Delhi on 14th June 1946.

I have been authorised by His Majesty's Government to place before Indian political leaders proposals designed to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government. These proposals' are at the present moment being explained to Parliament by the Secretary of State for India. My intention in this broadcast is to explain to you the proposals, the ideas underlying them, and the method by which I hope to put them into effect.

This is not an attempt to obtain or impose a constitutional settlement. His Majesty's Government had hoped that the leaders of the Indian parties would agree amongst themselves on a settlement of the communal issue, which is the main stumbling-block; but this hope has not been fulfilled.

In the meantime, India has great opportunities to be taken and great problems to be solved, which require a common effort by the leading men of all parties. I therefore propose, with the full support of His Majesty's Government, to invite Indian leaders both of Central and Provincial politics to take counsel with me with a view to the formation of a new Executive Council more representative of organised political opinion. The proposed new Council would represent the main communities and would include equal proportions of Caste Hindus and Moslems. It would work, if formed, under the existing Constitution. But it would be an entirely Indian Council, except for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, who would retain his position as War Member. It is also proposed that the portfolio of External Affairs, which has hitherto been held by the Viceroy, should be placed in charge of an Indian Member of Council, so far as the interests of British India are concerned.

A further step proposed by His Majesty's Government is the appointment of a British High Commissioner in India, as in the Dominions to represent Great Britain's Commercial and other such interests in India.

Such a new Executive Council will, you realise, represent a definite advance on the road to self-government. It will be almost entirely Indian, and the Finance and Home Members will for the first time be Indians, while an Indian will also be charged with the management of India's Foreign Affairs. Moreover Members will now be selected by the Governor-General after consultation with political leaders; though their appointment will of course be subject to the approval of His Majesty the King-Emperor.

The Council will work within the framework of the present constitution ; and there can be no question of the Governor-General agreeing not to exercise his constitutional power of control; but it will of course not be exercised unreasonably.

I should make it clear that the formation of this interim Government will in no way prejudice the final constitutional settlement. The main tasks for this New Executive Council would be :

First, to prosecute the war against Japan with the utmost energy till Japan is utterly defeated.

Secondly, to carry on the Government of British India, with all the manifold tasks of post-war development in front of it, until a new permanent constitution can be agreed upon and come into force.

Thirdly, to consider, when the Members of the Government think it possible, the means by which such agreement can be achieved. The third task is most important. I want to make it quite clear that neither I nor His Majesty's Government have lost sight of the need for a long-term solution, and that the present proposals are intended to make a long-term solution easier.

I have considered the best means of forming such a Council ; and have decided to invite the following to Viceregal Lodge to advise me:

Those now holding office as Premier in a Provincial Government ; or, for Provinces now under Section 93 Government, those who last held the office of Premier.

The Leader of the Congress Party and the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League in the Central Assembly; the leader of the Congress Party and the Muslim League in the Council of State; also the leaders of the Nationalist Party and the European Group in the Assembly.

Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah as the recognised leaders of the two main political parties.

Rao Bahadur N. Siva Raj to represent the Scheduled Classes. Master Tara Singh to represent the Sikhs.

Invitations to these gentlemen are being handed to them today and it is proposed to assemble the Conference on 25th June at Simla where we shall be cooler than at Delhi.

I trust that all those invited will attend the Conference and give me their help. On me and on them will lie a heavy responsibility in this fresh attempt to make progress towards a final settlement of India's future.

If the meeting is successful, I hope that we shall be able to agree on the formation of the new Executive Council at the Centre. I also hope that it will be possible for Ministries to re-assume office and again undertake the tasks of government in the Provinces now administered under Section 93 of the Constitution Act and that these Ministries will be coalitions.

If the meeting should unfortunately fail, we must carry on as at present until the parties are ready to come together. The existing Executive Council, which has done such valuable work for India, will continue it if other arrangements cannot be agreed.

But I have every hope that the meeting will succeed, if the party leaders will approach the problem with the sincere intention of working with me and with each other. I can assure them that there is behind this proposal a most genuine desire on the part of all responsible leaders in the United Kingdom and of the British people as a whole to help India towards her goal. I believe that this is more than a step towards that goal, it is a considerable stride forward, and a stride on the right path.

I should make it clear that these proposals affect British India only and do not make any alteration in the relations of the Princes with the Crown Representative.

With the approval of His Majesty's Government, and after consultation with my Council, orders have been given for the immediate release of the members of the Working Committee of Congress who are still in detention. I propose to leave the final decision about the others still under detention as the result of the 1942 disturbances to the new Central Government, if formed, and to the Provincial Governments.

The appropriate time for fresh elections for the Central and Provincial Legislatures will be discussed at the Conference.

Finally, I would ask you all to help in creating the atmosphere of goodwill and mutual confidence that is essential if we are to make progress. The destiny of this great country and of the many millions who live in it. depend on the wisdom and good understanding of the leaders, both of action and of thought, British and Indian, at this critical moment of India's history.

India's military reputation never stood higher in the world than it does at present ; thanks to the exploits of her sons drawn from all parts of the country. Her representatives at International conferences have won high regard for their statesmanlike attitude. Sympathy for India's aspirations and progress towards prosperity was never greater or more widespread. We have thus great assets if

we can use them wisely. But it will not be easy, it will not be quick; there is very much to do, there are many pitfalls and dangers. There is on all sides something to forgive and forget.

I believe in the future of India, and as far as in me lies will further her greatness. I ask you all for your co-operation and goodwill.

(i) *Mr. Gandhi's Statement.*

As soon as I read the broadcast, I sent a wire to His Excellency the Viceroy drawing his attention to the fact that I have no *focus standi* as the "recognised representative of the Congress." That function belongs to the President of the Congress or whoever is appointed to represent the Congress on a particular occasion.

For several years, I have acted unofficially as an adviser to the Congress whenever required. The public will remember that I went with the same unrepresentative character for my talks with the Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah, and I can take up no other position with the British Government, in this instance represented by the Viceroy.

There is one aspect of the Viceregal broadcast which certainly offends my ear and, I hope, will offend that of every politically-minded Hindu. I refer to the expression " caste Hindus." I claim that there is no such person, speaking politically, as a " Caste Hindu," let alone the Congress which seeks to represent the whole of India which is yearning after political independence. Does Veer Savarkar or Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee of the Hindu Mahasabha represent caste Hindus ? Do they not represent all Hindus without distinction of caste ? Do they not include the so-called untouchables ? Do they themselves claim to be caste Hindus ? I hope not. Of all politically-minded Hindus, I know that even the revered Pandit Malaviyaji, though he observes caste distinction, will refuse to be called a caste Hindu, as distinguished from the other Hindus, Modern tendency in Hinduism is to abolish all caste distinctions and this I maintain in spite of my knowledge of reactionary elements in Hindu society. I can only hope, therefore, that the Viceroy has allowed himself to make use of the expression in utter ignorance. I want to acquit him of knowingly wounding the susceptibilities of the Hindu society or dividing it. I would not have dwelt on this matter but for the fact that it touches the political mind of Hindus in its sensitive spot and carries with it political repercussions.

The proposed conference can do much useful work if it is put in its proper political setting and is at the very outset rendered immune from any fissiparous tendency. Undoubtedly all invitees might appear as Indians conjointly bent on achieving India's natural goal and not as persons representing several sections of Indian society.

That is how I have viewed the Bhulabhai-Liaquat Ali understanding which I suppose laid the foundations for the forthcoming Viceregal conference, Sri Bhulabhai Desai's proposal has no such colouring as the Viceregal broadcast would seem to have. I am not ashamed of the part I have played in advising Sri Bhulabhai Desai when he consulted me about his proposal. Sri Bhulabhai Desai's proposal, as I understood it, attracted me as one interested in solving the communal tangle, and I assured him that I would use my influence with the members of the Working Committee and give reasons for acceptance of his proposal and I have no doubt that, if both parties to the proposal correctly represent their constituents and have independence of India as their common goal, things must shape well.

At this point, I must stop and the Working Committee has to take up the thread. It is for its members to declare the Congress mind on the impending questions.—A .P.I.

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